

Women and Men in Europe

A fact-check report with various family implications

1 June 2019



The recently published report on 'The life of women and men in Europe' is a statistical portrait that aims at comparing women and men in their daily lives. Showing large differences and similarities between the lives of women and men in Europe.

The report analyzes demography and health, including for example data on life expectancy, single mothers and fathers. It also shows how Europeans perceive their health and their satisfied with life.

Data is provided on education levels, reconciliation of work and family life, full-time and part-time work, gender pay gap, female and male managers, etc. It highlights not only structural differences but also inequalities between women and men.

Other useful information is provided regarding nutrition, social habits and leisure activities, including for example data on smoking and alcohol consumption, body mass index, cinema attendance, childcare, housework and cooking.

The publication is a useful tool to follow-up on the implementation and evaluation of various policies. It is also crucial to identify the areas where improvement is necessary for the wellbeing of all families in Europe.

"I would like to make a point about data. It is still a challenge to obtain quality and timely data from all Member States right across the 169 targets and 230 indicators.

Lack of data impacts our ability to provide the most comprehensive overview of global progress and limits the decision-making and policy capacity of governments and others. Much greater investment in national statistical capabilities is essential.

I have asked UN-DESA and other relevant UN development system entities to look again at how we might overcome this data challenge in future reports on SDG progress, working together with national statistical systems."

[Deputy Secretary-General's remarks at informal briefing on the Global Sustainable Development Report and Special Addition of the Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report]

Extracts from 'The life of women and men in Europe: A statistical portrayal'. Available at <https://bit.ly/2WEa6vL>.

Life's cycle

Milestones in life

In all Member States, women leave their parental home and get married earlier than men. Life is filled with different milestones, such as starting school, entering adulthood by leaving the parental home and starting work, getting married, having children, retiring, etc. At the same time, there are large differences between women and men. The analyses of these milestones in life show, for example, that on average in the EU in 2017, women left their parental home two years earlier than men (at the age of 25 for women and 27 for men). Women also married earlier in all Member States, with an age difference at first marriage of more than 3 years in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece in 2016, while it was less than 2 years in Ireland (2015), Portugal and the UK (2015).

Regarding birth of first child, women in the EU gave birth on average at the age of 29 in 2016, ranging from around 26 years in Bulgaria and Romania to 31 years in Spain and Italy. Another significant difference between women and men is life expectancy. In all Member States, women lived longer than men – the average in the EU was 83.6 years for women and 78.2 years for men in 2016, a difference of 5.4 years. Among the Member States, the difference between women and men ranged from 10-11 years in Latvia and Lithuania to below 4 years in Denmark, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

Communities

In average, women live 5% more than men in the EU and as result of this longer life expectancy; there are more women than men, with 105 women per 100 in 2017. There were more women than men in nearly all Member States, with the largest differences in Latvia (18% more), Lithuania (17% more) and Estonia (13% more), while Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden had slightly more men than women. Looking at young people aged up to 18, the opposite pattern applies with 5%

more young men than young women of this age. On the other hand, among the older age group aged 65 and over, there were 33% more women.

Some differences can be seen when looking at the way women and men live; as a couple, single, with or without children. In the EU in 2017, 7.6% of women aged 25-49 lived alone with children, compared with 1.1% of men of the same age. For singles without children in this age group, the share was 9.6% for women and 16.3% for men. Another group where there are large differences between women and men is for singles aged 65 and over: the share of elderly women living alone (40.4%) was twice the share for men (19.9%). Among young people aged 15 to 24, 8.5% of women and 8.1% of young men lived alone. The same applies for those living in a couple: 45% of women and 48% of men aged 15 or over in the EU lived in a couple.

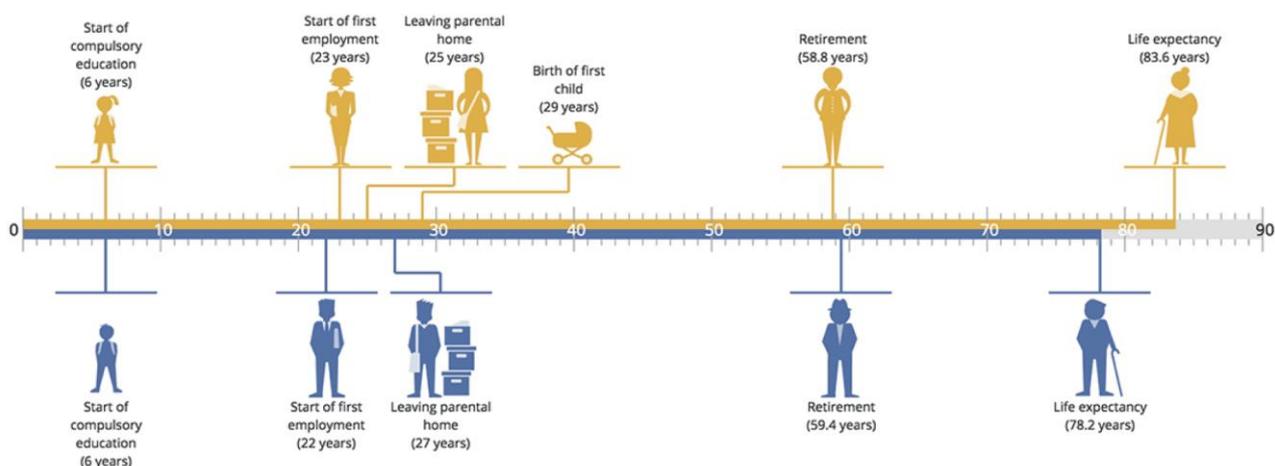
Health and happiness

The way people perceive their health is influenced by a complex set of factors, among others environmental, cultural and socioeconomic conditions. Not surprisingly, the older you get, the lower is the perception of being in good health — this is the same for both women and men.

Looking at different age groups, it can be seen that for those aged 16 to 44, 85% of women in the EU in 2016 felt they were in good health and 87% of men. This decreased to 62% of women and 65% of men for those aged 45 to 64, and for those aged 65 and over to 36% and 42% respectively. In almost all Member States, a larger share of men than women had a perception of being in good health and the difference increased with age. It is also interesting to note that the difference between Member States also increased with age.

About the three most common causes of death for both women and men in the EU it can be found that Cancer, ischemic heart diseases (for example heart attack) and cerebrovascular diseases (for example stroke) are among the most common. For all three,

Lifeline of women and men in EU



Source: Eurostat 2018.

deaths among men are more likely than among women: in the EU in 2015, 346 men per 100 000 died of cancer compared with 201 for women, 172 men per 100 000 died of heart diseases compared with 95 for women and 93 men per 100 000 died of cerebrovascular diseases, compared with 78 for women.

Even though there are large differences in the lives of women and men, when measuring life satisfaction, the perception is almost equal. Women and men are equally happy with their lives. On average in the EU, women aged 16 and over rated their life satisfaction as 7.0 on a scale from 0 to 10 and men 7.1 in 2013. In most of the Member States, the ratings were either equal or there was a difference of 0.1.

Transitions into adulthood

Education

When looking at the level of education completed, there are hardly any differences between women and men in the EU at lower education level. Nevertheless, it is not the same for the higher levels of education. Almost equal shares of women and men aged 25 to 64 in the EU (22% of women and 23% of men) had at most completed the low education level (lower secondary education) in 2017. A smaller share of women (44%) than men (48%) in the EU had successfully completed at most the medium level of education (upper secondary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education). This pattern could be observed in almost all Member States. When it comes to tertiary education, 33% of women in the EU had completed this level, compared with 30% of men. There was a majority of women with this education level in almost all Member States, with the largest differences between women and men observed in the Baltic Member States as well as Finland, Sweden and Slovenia.

Finding a job

On average, the employment rate of men is higher than that of women (73% compared with 62% in the EU in 2017). However, it is interesting to note that the difference between employment rates of women and men increases with the number of children. In the EU in 2017, the employment rate for women without children was 66%, while it was 74% for men. For women with one child, the rates increased and were 71% for women and 86% for men. For women with two children, the rate remained almost the same at 72%, while the one for men increased to 90%. For those with three or more children, the employment rate decreased and was 57% for women, compared with 85% for men. This pattern is observed in a large majority of Member States.

An important aspect of the reconciliation between work and family life is part-time work. This is, however, not equally spread between women and men: in the EU in 2017, 32% of women in employment worked part-time, compared with 9% of men. This differed

among the Member States, with the highest shares of women working part-time in the Netherlands (76%), Austria (47%) and Germany (46%), and of men in the Netherlands (27%) and Denmark (16%). The lowest share of both women and men working part-time was observed in Bulgaria (2% for both women and men).

In the EU in 2017, the unemployment rate was 7.9% for women and 7.4% for men. In thirteen Member States, the unemployment rate was higher for women, in twelve it was higher for men and in Belgium, Luxembourg and Poland it was even. The largest differences between female and male unemployment rates, where the rate was higher for women than for men, were observed in Greece (26.1% for women and 17.8% for men) and Spain (19.0% and 15.7%). The largest differences for the opposite pattern, lower rates for women than for men, were observed in Lithuania (5.7% for women and 8.6% for men) and Latvia (7.7% and 9.8%).

Building a future

When working, men generally occupy higher positions than women. For example, one can see that around a third (34%) of managers in the EU in 2017 were women. The share of women in this position was not over 50% in any of the Member States: the largest proportions were observed in Latvia (46%), Poland and Slovenia (both 41%), Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Sweden and Estonia (all 39%). On the other hand, the smallest shares were found in Luxembourg (19%), Cyprus (21%), Czechia (25%), the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy (all 27%).

In the EU in 2016, women earned 16.2% less than men when comparing their average gross hourly earnings. On average, women earned less than men in all Member States, however this gender pay gap varies. The largest differences were observed in Estonia (25.3%), Czechia (21.8%), Germany (21.5%), the UK (21.0%) and Austria (20.1%). On the other hand, the smallest differences in earnings between women and men were found in Romania (5.2%), Italy (5.3%), Luxembourg (5.5%), Belgium (6.1%) and Poland (7.2%).

As an unadjusted indicator, the gender pay gap gives an overall picture of gender inequalities in terms of hourly pay. Part of the earnings difference can be explained by individual characteristics of employed men and women (e.g. experience and education) and by sectorial and occupational gender segregations (e.g., there are more men than women in certain sectors/occupations with, on average, higher earnings compared to other sectors/occupations). Consequently, the pay gap is linked to a number of cultural, legal, social and economic factors, which go far beyond the single issue of equal pay for equal work.

When comparing hourly earnings for different professions, in all nine groups of professions listed women earned less than men on average in the EU in 2014. This was also the case in all Member States, with very few exceptions. The profession with the largest

differences in hourly earnings (23% lower earnings for women than for men) was managers. The smallest differences were observed for clerical support workers (office clerks, secretaries etc.) and service and sales workers (both 8% lower), two of the professions with the lowest salaries.

Daily life

Eating and exercising

When looking at consumption of alcohol, cigarettes or fruit and vegetables, there are large differences between women and men and also between Member States. A larger share of men than women in the EU drink alcohol on a weekly basis (38% of men aged 18 and over, compared with 23% of women in 2014). Among the Member States, the shares for men ranged from 21% in Latvia to 52% in the UK, and for women from 5% in Romania and Lithuania to 40% in the UK.

A larger share of men than women in the EU are smokers (24% of men aged 18 and over are daily smokers, compared with 16% of women). The proportions varied for men from 10% in Sweden to 40% in Cyprus and for women from 9% in Romania to 23% in Austria.

Unlike alcohol consumption and smoking, regular consumption of fruit and vegetables is considered an important element of a healthy and balanced diet. In the EU in 2014, 49% of men ate one to four portions of fruits and vegetables on a daily basis, compared with 54% of women. The shares for men varied from 26% in the Netherlands to 70% in Belgium and for women from 32% in the Netherlands to 73% in Belgium.

Another component of a healthy life is regular physical activity. In the EU in 2014, 36% of men spent 150 minutes or more per week on sports and non-work-related physical activities, compared with 26% of women. The proportions ranged for men from 14% in Romania to 55% in Finland and for women from 4% in Romania to 57% in Denmark.

All the factors mentioned above have an impact on weight. In the EU in 2014, 57% of men were considered to be overweight (having a body mass index of 25 or over), compared with 44% of women. The proportions among the Member States varied for men from 52% in the Netherlands and France to 66% in Croatia, and for women from 35% in Italy to 54% in Malta.

Culture and society

Social activities, like seeing friends, and cultural habits, such as going to concerts, also differ between women and men. Reading books was more common among women than among men in the EU (42% of women and 31% of men in 2013), as well as going to live performances, such as concerts (30% of women and 27% of men in 2015). Cultural habits, such as going to the cinema (28% of women and 27% of men) and visiting cultural sites (27% of both women and men) or getting together with friends (23% of both women and men), were very similar among women and men. However, going to live sports events was more common among men than among women (21% of men and 13% of women) in the EU.

Unpaid care and housework

For all Member States, there is a much larger share of women doing childcare, housework and cooking than men. In the EU in 2016, 92% of women aged 25 to 49 (with children under 18) took care of their children on a daily basis, compared with 68% of men. Among the Member States, the largest differences between women and men were observed in Greece (95% of women and 53% of men) and Malta (93% and 56%), while the smallest were found in Sweden (96% of women and 90% of men) and Slovenia (88% and 82%). For housework and cooking, the differences are even larger. In the EU in 2016, 79% of women cooked and/or did housework on a daily basis, compared with 34% of men. The largest differences between women and men were found in Greece (85% of women and 16% of men) and Italy (81% and 20%), and the smallest in Sweden (74% women and 56% of men) and Latvia (82% and 57%).

